

WARMINSTER URBAN COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

Warminster, February 4th, 1899.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—In presenting to you my annual report on the health and sanitary condition of the town, I am pleased to be able to congratulate you on a low death-rate, and an almost total absence of infectious disease. From the tabular forms accompanying this report it will be seen that the deaths of seventy-seven persons were registered. This, after deducting the deaths of two persons in the Cottage Hospital from outside the district, would give a death-rate for the year of 13·5 per 1,000, which compares favourably with former years, as may be seen from the following table of death-rates for the last six years:—1892, 19·2 per 1,000; 1893, 19·7 per 1,000; 1894, 20·5 per 1,000; 1895, 15·6 per 1,000; 1896, 14·3 per 1,000; 1897, 16·1 per 1,000, which gives an average for these years of 17·5 per 1,000. The following table epitomises the ages at which deaths occurred—under one year of age, 8; over one and under five years of age, 3; over five and under fifteen years of age, 2; over fifteen and under twenty-five, 2; over twenty-five and under sixty-five, 26; over sixty-five years of age, 36. The births numbered 154, equal to a birth-rate of 27·7 per 1,000. There have been no deaths from zymotic disease, and the death-rate of young children under one year of age, 52·1 per 1,000 ~~births~~ births registered, are much below the average. The following cases of infectious diseases were notified:—Scarlet fever, five cases; enteric fever, one case; puerperal fever, two cases; erysipelas, one case. The enteric fever case was brought for treatment to the Cottage Hospital from one of the adjacent villages, and the cases of scarlet fever were not epidemic, but were reported to me respectively in the months of January, March, July, August, and October. In my last report I stated that the treatment and disposal of the sewage of the town was still under consideration, and that the septic tank system had been submitted to the Local Government Board for their approval. This scheme was rejected by that body on the ground that there was not provided in the scheme an adequate area of suitable land essential to the proper purification of the sewage, and they urged that some system of broad irrigation should be adopted. Such a plan has now been adopted by the Council, and I believe sanctioned by the Local Government Board. The temporary scheme of pumping the sewage on fresh land near the sewage farm has been in operation throughout the year, and has been most successful. During the year many closets have been connected, and we insist on this being done where practicable, but the whole of the town is not at present supplied with a proper system of drainage. This, I hope, will be remedied during the year, when we shall insist on all old cesspits being done away with. The important subject of filth removal and the proper situations of ashpits, etc., has been a matter of special attention in certain parts of the town in the past year. Very few complaints have been made of the emanations from the manholes, and the extra ventilation by shafts adopted a few years ago has had much to do with the improvement. Systematic inspections of the whole town have been made, generally in company with the sanitary officer, and house to house visitations of those parts occupied by the poorer classes. Four cases of overcrowding were reported, and many cottages were reported as unfit for habitation, and were either closed or repaired and rendered habitable. The most noticeable improvement in the town has been the repair and laying out of Woodcock-lane, which from an almost impassable lane has been converted into a well-made road, properly drained, with gas and water laid on and a nice foot-path extending the whole length of the road. This road will be a source of convenience to people resident there, and also afford the townspeople a new exit from the town. In accordance with the order of the Council I have submitted a sample of the town water to the Clinical Research Association for analysis. The result, as seen below, was of a most satisfactory character:—Total solid residue (dried at 120° C.), 9·17 grains per gallon; combined chlorine, 1·5; expressed as common salt, 2·4; nitrogen as nitrates, 0·17; nitrates, *nil*; saline ammonia, traces; albuminoid ammonia, 0·0007; oxygen required to oxidise the organic matter, *nil*; hardness (in degrees), 4°·0; lead or copper, *nil*. Observations: “This is a water of great purity, and eminently fitted for domestic use.” I think it would be better if the analysis was taken later in the summer, when the springs are at their lowest, as although I do not anticipate that it would make any difference in the case of spring water, yet in wells I have often found the water impure, but later on, when the springs have risen, the water has been comparatively pure. The analysis could still be incorporated with my report at the end of the year. I have made monthly reports to you on the state of the health of the town, and on any insanitary condition or outbreak of infectious disease coming to my knowledge have personally investigated all cases of the latter notified to me. The bakehouses, slaughterhouses, and dairies have been regularly inspected, and although it is most necessary that the greatest attention should be paid to the sanitary condition of the latter, I think it has yet to be proved that milk is a fruitful source of tuberculosis. I beg to submit with this report the usual tables of mortality and prevalence of infectious diseases in the town.

I am, Mr. Chairman & Gentlemen, yours faithfully,

FRED. I. FLOWER,

Medical Officer of Health.

